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BROADCASTERS VICTORY COUNCIL

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Number 9

March 31, 1942

AMONG OTHER RUMORS **

It's a funny thing. Somebody thinks something might happen, so he tells somebody else, and then somebody else gets to pondering what he's heard, and pretty soon it comes out as the gospel truth. People like to have other people think they're omniscient, which causes about ninety percent of the inaccuracy and rumor in this giddy world. Take, for example, the oft-heard whisper that shortages of tubes and operators will soon lead Washington forcibly to close down all smaller radio stations.

The facts leading up to this supposition, alas, are quite true. Transmitting tubes are becoming rare as Gutenberg Bibles, almost, and the broadcasting industry's reservoir of veteran engineers dwindles with each draft call. But we've encountered no plan as yet to take the smaller stations off the air, nor do we think that such a move would help very much. Some of them, naturally, may be forced off when they run out of spare tubes, or can't assemble a qualified staff. We have it straight from FCC Chairman Fly - and five'll get you five hundred that he knows - the Commission has never given thought to such a move.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS **

The Domestic Broadcast Committee of the DCB - it's known as Committee IV of the nine committees making up the DCB - will hold a session next week, and the BVC has a few recommendations to put forth in the belief that they'll give radio a better chance to serve the war effort.

First of these ideas - they fall into three groups - is a notion that radio stations can do yeoman's work in supplementing regular air raid warnings, particularly since the nation seems a little weak in this department throughout many big cities. You'll remember, we hope, that Committee IV's original plan was to have broadcast transmitters shut up tighter than an Ipswich clam as soon as an alarm happened to be sounded. They were to give no notice, no announcement - just push the "off" button and probably leave a lot of listeners fiddling inside their sets to see what had blown out this time.

The BVC thinks that a brief but explanatory announcement should be given before leaving the air, particularly since it's become woefully apparent that most large centers of population don't have enough alarm sirens to scare a chipmunk. Announcing an air raid is a job for mass communication, and broadcasting has what it takes.

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2. The second part is devoted to a detailed description of the various methods used.

3. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the results obtained.

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WE ALSO THINK **

Our second thought deals with the technician shortage. Several weeks ago the FCC lowered its standards demanded for transmitter engineers, and at first glance everybody thought matters had been eased. Unfortunately the relief was only too temporary. There just aren't enough Second Class operators in the country to fill up the ranks, besides which the war effort needs Second Class as well as First Class ticket-holders. Aware of the need for maintaining standards of operation, the BVC still thinks that a temporary class of "special operators" might be created for tasks of transmitter supervision during the indeterminate duration of the war. These could be qualified men, approved by the station owners who employ them, and carefully schooled in the duties they have to perform. They might not know all the incidental and erudite answers to the government examination, but it's our theory that no station owner who has a fat amount of money wrapped up in his transmitting equipment - with no prospect of immediate replacement - is going to let any non-qualified nimcompoop play around with it. And if a class of "special" operators is authorized, we feel sure the leading technicians' unions will not hesitate to relax their standards accordingly, admitting these temporary men to membership from the present until, say, six months after the war smoke starts to clear. There will be union representatives at the DCB meeting, incidentally.

Idea No. 3 deals with the growing bugaboo of tubes. The BVC intends suggesting to Committee IV that it give thought to the establishment of a clearing house that would assure broadcasters quick delivery of these vital items - by virtue, naturally enough, of a high priority rating.

MEN WITH LICENSES **

Harking back to that matter of licensed operators - you'll find it a few paragraphs ago - there has been frequent confusion among some broadcasters as to just how many licensed men they really need around their station. Control room operators don't have to possess licenses; even your studio supervisors, your remote men, and the equipment maintenance crew don't need them. But the fellow who checks the meters on your transmitter, the one who keeps an eye on the overmodulation indicator, the one who's in top charge at the transmitter building itself - he has to have a license hanging on the wall.

There are, of course, some union agreements which make it necessary to hire only licensed men. Normally we would neither condemn nor condone such agreements. But today, when every licensed operator who isn't in uniform or a war plant should be helping to keep the nation's radio stations on the air, we wonder if it's really necessary. The same raised eyebrow goes for any station that's retaining more licensed operators on its staff than it really needs.

WE PASS ALONG TO YOU **

The BVC has been asked by the OFF to relay its appreciation for the numerous suggestions that have been coming in, day after day, from the country's radio men. Most of these have been sent first to the NAB or the



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BVC which, by a justifiable weeding process (mainly to avoid duplication), relay the meat of broadcasting's war contributions to the OFF.

In voicing blanket thanks through this BVC newsletter, the OFF points out that it's been trying valiantly to answer every letter, but at this point the waiting list is far ahead of the stenographic help. From the welter of suggestions - and they're being studied by the BVC as well as the OFF - there is gradually emerging a nationwide plan of concerted co-operation whereby radio can execute as good a job on the Axis as any battery of 16-inch Navy guns.

We rather like a suggestion that comes from Harrison Holliway of KFI in San Francisco. He points out that radio stations can do more than simply ask the public to attend to this or contribute to that. It's a nice note now and then to swing the spotlight around on some local or national war effort that's doing a swell job. Makes people feel warm inside, and gives them an incentive to do an even better job next time.

REMEMBER NORWAY **

Another thing the OFF asked us - the week of April 9 marks the second anniversary of the invasion of Norway. Not, of course, that it's any cause for throwing your hat in the air or hanging out Japanese lanterns. Instead, it comes as a somber remembrance of what happened to a democratic country that had democratic ideals, but didn't quite wake up fast enough.

Norway, in its own invisible way, is helping the fight against the Axis. Sometimes it's only farmers with pitchforks, and sometimes it's men who come out of the night, strike, and then go back into the night. The OFF thinks maybe a special effort by American radio stations to schedule in a bit of Norwegian music, a few special Norwegian programs, would be an appropriate tribute. If any stations do anything special along this line it might be sent in. The Donnivan Committee on all its short wave programs is pushing the "Your Battle is Our Battle" theme to all of the over run countries.

RADIO'S GIFT BONDS **

Recent communiques from the Defense Savings Staff of the U. S. Treasury point out a newly-affirmed policy which frowns on the use of Defense Stamps or Bonds in promotional or advertising ventures. To be specific: "Under no circumstances should Defense Stamps or Bonds be used as premiums, discounts, gifts, trade stimulators, or be in any way associated with the promotion of merchandise."

At first glance this would seem to put a quashing quietus upon the giving of Defense Bonds as prizes on radio shows. The Washington Better Business Bureau, however, has probed this thing deeper and reports that such is not so. As long as the Bond - or Stamps, if you're going to be penurious - is given as a prize on a program "for entertainment purposes", and the unsuspecting recipient isn't asked to purchase a tube of tooth paste or a lawnmower in return, then it's all as sweet and above-board as a June field of clover. Matter of fact, the idea's a grand one, and adds an extra push for the Treasury Department's campaign.

CONCERNING COAL **

A while back (BVC Newsletter #7) we commented on the chances of a coal shortage next fall, springing from the scarcity of suitable transportation betwixt mine and the family hearth. A warning had come from the Solid Fuels Office, Department of Interior, that the public must order its next winter's coal before the end of April - otherwise it may not be able to get any when the winds blow cold.

The matter has called for subsequent clarification. A lot of people didn't believe the prospect could be so bad as that. And, as people are wont when beset with a conviction, they said so. The official answer is now this:- It is expected there will be transportation available up to August. If you order your coal before August, you'll probably get delivery, but it won't break any records for speed. And the nearer you get to August, the longer you may expect to have to wait for the black stuff to rattle down the coal chute into your cellar.

The more people who order their coal during April and the Spring months the less load it'll place on the nation's transportation facilities next Fall. And unless you've turned your coal bin into a handball court, there isn't much sense in letting it stand idle all summer anyway.

CONSIDER THE MESSAGE **

The day's mail brings a lot of odd stuff into the average radio station, some of which is airworthy and a great deal more that - well, you know how it goes.

The patriots who scratched their names at the bottom of a famous document in Philadelphia many years ago intended that people in this country should say what they wanted, when they wanted, even to the extremes of sometimes shooting their mouths off. Criticism of wide latitude - up the brink of sedition is patiently allowable even in wartime. But it occurred to us that all radio stations should take extreme caution these days to weigh the effects and the danger of airing critical material that hits around the belt.

It doesn't do anyone any good. The only axe-grinding we need today is a grinding of axes to use against the Axis. If a man has suggestions to make, and they are coherent suggestions, let him stand up and say his piece. But if he wants to throw spithalls and make faces, American radio isn't the place for him to do it.

THE PRIORITY LIST **

We have new news on the OFF's priority list which, you'll remember, is intended to evaluate the importance of all current drives, appeals, campaigns, etal on the Washington front. There have been snags, but the OFF declares, cross its heart, that the first edition of the list will be available to broadcasters about the middle of April.

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BLUEPRINT FOR COOPERATION **

If you get bewildered by the flood of things radio is now being asked to do as part of its wartime job, maybe the following excerpt from a letter received by the BVC will help put your feet on the ground. It comes from KALE-KOIN, Portland, Oregon.

"We have made a sincere effort to adapt all material received to the requirements of our local agencies. We first endeavor to secure complete understanding of the problem involved and then endeavor to work it out with the local agencies involved. We have tried to approach each of our war effort services as we would an important commercial problem. This means that the accent on any campaign depends upon its local implications. This policy allows for such all-out effort as we were able to give during Oregon's 'Fledge Card Campaign' for United States Defense Bonds. It also allows us to change our accent on local recruiting according to the service most in need of the publicity. We like to feel that Oregon's position in the sale of Defense Bonds and in all branches of recruiting is at least partially due to this type of planning."

Those are words from a station that obviously realizes its part in the national war effort. They indicate that thought, initiative and intelligence are at work. And, we like to think, they indicate that a great share of the broadcasting industry looks at radios task with the same earnest gravity.

--- BVC ---



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Nos. 1-36. 1942.

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